

April 10, 2011
Lent 5

"We Are Alive in the Spirit"

ROMANS 8:11-19

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

"Pastor, I found a mistake in the Bible. Last week we read a verse that said Jesus raised himself from the dead. This past week I found a verse that said the Father raised Jesus from the dead. There must be a mistake. Who raised Jesus from the dead? Did Jesus raise himself from the dead, or did the Father raise him from the dead?" La Verne was reading the Bible for the first time in her life at the age of 50 after being immersed in the occult and new age thinking. What a joy it was to point her to this verse just read to you from Romans 8 that says, "And if the Spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies who lives in you." When La Verne heard these words she chortled with delight. Father, Son and Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead. The Lord used this to help her believe that our God is three persons and yet one God.

Oh, dear Christian, do you realize this morning the tremendous power of the Holy Spirit that was living in you this past week and will live in you this coming week of life here on this earth? This past week your heart pumped 10,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of veins and arteries within your body. Even more amazing the power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is constantly giving life to your mortal bodies. That is what it says here in verse 11 of Romans 8.

Have you ever been to the doctor and had a picture taken of your heart as it was beating? This sophisticated equipment can show the life giving blood as it passes through the heart, but it cannot reveal this new person that lives in you that beats with the power the Holy Spirit provides. Let's use these words from Romans 8 to help us appreciate what the Holy Spirit is constantly doing for us in our lives.

The Holy Spirit helps equips us to fight against sin

The powerful Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead helps you put to death sin when it pops up in your life. "Therefore we have an obligation- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if we live according to the sinful nature, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." If I take this pin and poke it into my finger, I will be able to see a drop of blood on my finger tip. Beneath my skin, blood is constantly circulating throughout my body. Within this body of ours the Holy Spirit is constantly creating in us a desire to love God and please God because of the way Jesus has rescued us. Romans 8 begins with the words, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." It ends with the words thought that nothing in all creation will ever separate us from his love. We live each day in total amazement at what Jesus did to declare us not guilty when we deserve to be condemned for our sin.

The Holy Spirit leads you to thank the Lord by putting to death the misdeeds of the body. The Holy Spirit helps you see sin when it pops up in your life and then gives you the desire to get rid of that sin. The Holy Spirit creates a violent streak in every Christian, a good violent streak that says "I want to get rid of that sin in my life right now." When an infection enters your body, the body goes into attack mode. It sends white corpuscles to surround the infection. The Holy Spirit sends you into attack mode when sin pops up in your life.

Think of this past week in your life. When you were tempted to tolerate angry thoughts inside your heart, or when you had evil thoughts that led you to feel sorry for yourself, or when some sinful desire or lust came into your life, the Holy Spirit put you on red alert and led you to go to war against that sin. Picture the elite soldier behind enemy lines. The snapping of twig, the rustle of a leave, the shadow in the darkness, a cough and he is ready to pull trigger. You are a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit to take immediate action against the misdeeds of the body. I cannot tolerate the Bermuda grass that is starting to grow in my garden. It has to die today not tomorrow. So it is with sin.

My dear fellow believers, let's celebrate the mean streak we have inside of us, this holy, godly mean streak. Let's celebrate this violent side of us, this good violent side that goes into attack mode against sin. This is not something you develop on your own. This is a blessing you have because of the Holy Spirit. "For if you live according to the sinful nature you will die, but if by the Spirit of God you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live." Thank the Holy Spirit for every time in your life that you are upset when sin rears its ugly head in your life. Thank the Holy Spirit for equipping you with the desire and the power to take a big club against that sin and put it to death, all because of your love for what Jesus has done to make you a dear child of your heavenly Father.

The Holy Spirit testifies we are God's children

The Holy Spirit also keeps reminding you hour by hour and minute by minute that you are a child of your heavenly Father. Romans 8:14 tells us, "Because those who are led by Spirit of God are sons of God." We become a child of God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 3, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." Ephesians 2 says, "Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even we were dead in

transgressions.” The Holy Spirit loves to lead us. It says we are led by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit leads you to see your sin. The Holy Spirit convicts you and warns you and shows you the judgment to come. The Holy Spirit then leads you to Jesus. Your eyes of faith see every transgression placed on Jesus. You see him being punished in your place.

The Holy Spirit loves to hold a mirror up to you and have you look into the mirror and remember who you are by God’s grace. “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received a Spirit of sonship.” The devil holds a mirror up to you and says, “Look in that mirror you old toad. How could God ever love a person like you? You need to do something to earn his favor and get back in his good graces.” The Holy Spirit holds up the mirror and says, “Look at how you have the spirit of sonship or adoption.” Some of you sitting here have been adopted legally by parents. Think of how much work on their part to claim you legally as their own child. Oh, dear Christian, let us not forget what our heavenly Father did to adopt us as his dear children. Galatians 4 says, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” The holy and righteous demands of God’s law were fully met for us in Jesus, so we can be adopted by our God. Jesus was stricken, smitten and afflicted by his own Father, so you could be his son and daughter. Your Father now has this amazing, intense, personal love for you. The psalmist David was not exaggerating when he said the Lord has thoughts for us more countless than the grains of sand.

And you get to cry out to your heavenly Father in time of need and you know that he will hear you. “And by him we cry, Abba Father.” Jesus prayed in the Garden, “Abba Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me.” The word is an Aramaic word of endearment. “Dad” “Papa” “Pop” “Daddy” These are terms of endearment children use when they talk to their fathers. We get to go directly to our Father in prayer. Think of how often you prayed to your Father this past week. You began your prayers with the words, “Dear Father, or heavenly Father, or my dear heavenly Father.” You were so confident that he heard every word in your because Jesus assures you, “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will hear you.”

May I ask you to give your undivided attention to the next verse that I am going to read to you about the Holy Spirit reminding you that you are God’s dear child? Verse 16 says, “The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” There is a wonderful synergy that takes place between the new person you are in Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has a way of reaching in to who you are in Christ and reminding you that you are child of your heavenly Father. I believe that if we could find an electronic device to count how many times the Holy Spirit reminds us we are God’s children in one week, we would be stunned, joyfully stunned, to know how often this happens. I think of the lost son waking up that morning after the big feast that celebrated his homecoming. He was privileged to sleep with his father. The boy who slept with pigs was not sleeping in his father’s house. He wakes up and feels something on his finger. It is his father’s ring. The Holy Spirit is like this ring on the finger, always reminding you of who you are.

The Holy Spirit reminds us of our future glory

Some of you sitting here have had a tough week. Maybe you even prayed more than once for Jesus to come back in glory, end this world, and take you home. The Holy Spirit

keeps reminding you of this future glory that waits for you. "Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we might also share in his glory." There are sufferings we go through in life no different from the sufferings people experience who are not God's children through Jesus. We suffer from sickness, job loss, war, problems in families. Then there are the battles we face, the struggles, the crosses we carry because we want to follow Jesus and serve him. Someday all these struggles will come to an end. We are joint heirs with Christ. The night before he died Jesus prayed, "O Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the world began." This glory that waits for us far exceeds any suffering we experience in this life. Week after week because of the Holy Spirit working in us we can say confidently with Paul, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Amen.